

## 1 Reconstructing the Legacy of Offenbach in Budapest

Probably the biggest cultural shock I have ever experienced was when I first watched a televised performance of Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* by the Lyons Opera Company, directed by Laurent Pelly. It happened somewhere around 2000, some years after the production was premiered at the Opéra de Lyon in 1997. Conducted by Marc Minkowski with Natalie Dessay in Eurydice's role, this superb performance was a revelatory experience. The real shock for me was not so much the quality of its presentation as just how good, and witty, the music itself was – and how strikingly the entire production contrasted with the staging of operetta as it is traditionally understood in Hungary. Fortunately, a DVD recording of the production was released, and the first thing I did during my Paris sojourn in 2003 was to purchase it.

The next surprise came in 2005 when the same piece was staged at a spoken theatre in Budapest. Hearing a work by Offenbach there at the beginning of the third millennium was quite a rare event. Not only was the staging completely different from the last performance I had attended but also, as a matter of fact, it was not even the same work, as neither the text nor the music resembled those of the Lyons production.

During the past fifteen years, I have tried to understand the reasons for this difference. The first step was to immerse myself in the secondary literature on the composer. Since there were no books or studies about him in my mother tongue, I studied the bibliographical survey published by three German authors in 1998.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, it was possible for me to obtain the detailed and well-documented biography by Jean-Claude Yon, first published in 2000, which provided a fascinating overview not only of the composer but also of the historical and cultural context of his life and work.<sup>2</sup>

Yon's volume, together with Ralf-Olivier Schwarz's recent study,<sup>3</sup> reveals an unusual career. It narrates the story of a musician who, at the age of fourteen, settled in Paris in order to attend the Conservatoire and continue the violoncello studies he had begun in his native city, Cologne. However, he left the institution after about a year and became an orchestral musician, then a salon virtuoso. He finally became a theatrical composer, but not without a struggle. As a stage author, he made his debut in 1839, not with a full-length opera but as the co-author of musical interpolations in a vaudeville production. During the next decade and a half, he unsuccessfully tried to establish

<sup>1</sup> Christoph Dohr, Kerstin Rüllke, and Thomas Schipperges (eds.), *Bibliotheca Offenbachiana* (Cologne: Dohr, 1998); *Beiträge zur Offenbach-Forschung*, ed. Christoph Dohr, Vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Claude Yon, *Jacques Offenbach* (Paris: Gallimard, 2/2010 [1/2000]).

<sup>3</sup> See also Ralf-Olivier Schwarz, *Jacques Offenbach: Ein Europäisches Portrait* (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2019).

himself in the Paris musical theatres as an opera composer. Until 1855, he had a lasting relationship with only one state institution, the Comédie-Française, which was, however, a spoken-word theatre. As the conductor of the French National Theatre (1850–5), his main task was to perform incidental music. However, in the year of the first Paris world exhibition, he founded his own theatrical enterprise, the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens, which provided extremely popular musical stage works. At first, due to administrative restrictions, he created only short one-act pieces with just a few characters (*opérettes*). From 1858, beginning with *Orphée aux enfers*, he also began to create full-length evening works requiring bigger forces (*opéra bouffes*). During the next two-and-a-half decades, he proved to be an extremely successful stage composer, not only in Paris but throughout Europe. From 1857 on, his theatre company gave guest performances in London, Berlin, Brussels, and Vienna; his works were frequently played in such places as Munich, Hamburg, and Bad Ems. Around 1860, even the primary French theatres capitulated, although his *opéra-comique* *Barkouf*, premiered at the Opéra-Comique, and his ballet-pantomime *Le Papillon*, staged at the Opéra, had no lasting success. His reputation reached its peak in 1867, when his works were performed in no fewer than five theatres in the French capital. Following the 1870–1 Franco–Prussian War, the popularity of his pieces decreased somewhat. As the director of the Théâtre de la Gaîté, where he provided his spectacular *féeries* (fairy plays with lavish scenery and stage effects) like *Le Roi Carotte*, he went bankrupt, so that in 1876 he undertook an American tour in order to re-establish his financial position. At the end of his life, he was working on what is probably his best-known piece, the fantastic opera *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. The first performance of this work, at the Opéra-Comique in 1881, was however already a posthumous premiere.

Since both the composer and his works intrigued me, after some time my research began to focus on the phenomena of Offenbach's reception in Budapest and its connection to the development of operetta there. The task was not easy as no systematic study of primary sources concerning his fortune in Hungary had been conducted before, although some sporadic performance data had appeared in such works as Loewenberg's *Annals of Opera*,<sup>4</sup> András Batta's popular monograph,<sup>5</sup> and Moritz Csáky's in-depth volume about the ideology of Viennese operetta.<sup>6</sup> This is all the more interesting since Western European

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera – 1597–1940* (London: John Calder, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> András Batta, *Träume sind Schäume: Die Operette in der Donaumonarchie*, trans. by Maria Eisenreich (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Moritz Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne: Ein kulturhistorischer Essay zur österreichischen Identität* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996).

research has produced important results over the past three decades concerning the composer's reception history: in 1999 a multi-authored volume was published documenting Offenbach performances in several European cities from London to Vienna; its editor, Rainer Franke, urged the investigation of the composer's Eastern European reception.<sup>7</sup> A shorter study of a similar subject in French was published in 2003 by Yon himself, whose witty title can be translated into English as: 'The Posthumous Career of a Musician, or Offenbach in the Underworld'.<sup>8</sup> It is also worth mentioning Laurence Senelick's more recent book-length study, published in 2017, which attributes to Offenbach no less than 'the making of modern culture'.<sup>9</sup> Hungarian secondary literature about Offenbach did not exist, however, until my own study was published in 2021.<sup>10</sup> Until then, the only available publication concerning the subject was a translation of the composer's American travel notes,<sup>11</sup> published long ago in 1960.<sup>12</sup>

The lack of Hungarian secondary literature is not surprising. In the long run, Offenbach and operetta represents all that has traditionally been regarded by some Hungarians as 'unnational' in the history of their country: the study of his fortunes necessarily recalls the practice of German-speaking theatre in the nineteenth century, as well as the history of local German-speaking and Jewish populations – also including the memory of the Holocaust.

Hence, as a research fellow of the Budapest Institute for Musicology, I began my research by studying a huge corpus of performance materials used in Budapest operetta performances between 1859 and 1956, now mainly kept at the Music and Theatre Department of the Széchényi National Library (abbreviated as H-Bn in the footnotes of this Element), and partly in other local libraries and public collections (for a detailed list, see the Acknowledgements). Then, the next step was the study of the local press reception of Offenbach's pieces.

During the research, I not only systematized the extant musico-theatrical sources, performance data, and press reviews, but also attempted to identify

<sup>7</sup> Rainer Franke (ed.), *Offenbach und die Schauplätze seines Musiktheaters* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1999), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Claude Yon, 'La carrière posthume d'un musicien ou Offenbach aux enfers', *Histoire, économie et société* 22/2 (2003), 261–73.

<sup>9</sup> Laurence Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Péter Bozó, *Fejezetek Jacques Offenbach magyarországi fogadtatásának történetéből* [Chapters from the history of Jacques Offenbach's Hungarian reception] (Budapest: Rózsavölgyi és Társa Kiadó, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Offenbach, *Egy muzsikus útinaplója: Offenbach Amerikában* [The travel diary of a musician: Offenbach in America], trans. by Mária Peterdi, introduction by Sándor Fischer (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1960).

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Offenbach, *Offenbach en Amérique: Note d'un musicien en voyage, précédée d'une notice biographique par Albert Wolff* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1877).

those factors that affected Offenbach's reception in Budapest. One of the major factors proved to be the local tradition of operetta itself. Differences became apparent already in the second half of the nineteenth century when Offenbach's musical stage works first came to Budapest. More often than not, the Hungarian public got to know these pieces in Austro-German or German adaptations, which necessarily changed the character of the works. Budapest translators also adapted the librettos to local circumstances, not to mention the quite usual practice of re-orchestrating the pieces on the basis of piano vocal scores.

This practice is normal in musical theatre and is not limited to operetta (even if there is a significant difference between the adaptation of a composer's own work and the adaptation of an adaptation).<sup>13</sup> However, what happened with Offenbach's pieces in Budapest in the mid-twentieth century differed radically from earlier adaptations. In the age of totalitarianism, two extremes determined the fate of his pieces in musico-theatrical life: first, their public performance was prohibited during the persecution of Jews between 1938 and 1944; second, some of his works were instrumentalized as pseudo-Offenbachian propaganda pieces during the period between 1949 and 1956. Since both antisemitism and Stalinism exerted a significant influence on Offenbach's Budapest reception, it was the period between the beginning of the Horthy era (1920) and the end of the Rákosi regime (1956) that was chosen as the subject of the present study.

The fundamental thesis of this work is that the difference between the Lyons and Budapest performances of *Orphée* was not merely in the quality of the productions and performers (although it is beyond doubt that there can be radical differences between the staging of the same work by an opera house company and a spoken-word theatre). It is more likely that what happened with Offenbach between 1920 and 1956 still affects the fate of his works in Budapest today. As it was plainly and frankly put by one of the workers at the Budapest Operetta Theatre in 2013: 'Offenbach's pieces are unpopular among the local public these days.' In discussing their performances during the period in question, the primary goal of the two main parts of this study is to show how and why the meaning and connotation of his works changed in such a radical way in Hungary.

## 2 Offenbach's Reception in Budapest before 1920

It should be emphasized that Offenbach performances in Budapest began well before 1920. His operettas were a brand-new sensation when his first

<sup>13</sup> See Hilary Poriss, *Changing the Score: Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

pieces arrived in the Hungarian capital just four years after the establishment of the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens. According to the contemporary press, it was in the summer of 1859 that Carl Treumann, a German actor and stage manager of the Vienna Carl-Theater, gave a guest performance at the Buda Arena (see Figure 1).<sup>14</sup> He appeared on the scene in three one-act operettas by Offenbach, first as Peter in *Hochzeit bei Laternenschein* (a role called Guillot in the French original).<sup>15</sup> The following summer all three pieces were revived, and two more one-acters were premiered with Treumann's assistance, partly on the same stage (abbreviated as BA in Table 1) and partly at the Pester Stadttheater (abbreviated as PS).<sup>16</sup>

It is highly typical of local circumstances that the first operettas performed in Budapest were not original works but Viennese adaptations, at least partly in Carl Binder's orchestration, performed by German-speaking artists in a German theatre.<sup>17</sup> Theatrical traditions and audiences in Budapest (which, until 1873, was in fact three separate cities, Buda, Óbuda, and Pest) differed so significantly from those in Paris that a discussion of local Offenbach performances must start with these fundamental differences.

Second Empire Paris was a capital of European theatre and opera. Its operatic life flourished in several institutions dedicated to various genres.<sup>18</sup> Historical *grands opéras* in four or five acts, shorter works called *petits-opéras*, and ballets were performed at the Opéra; Italian opera was the domain of the Théâtre-Italien; reformist pieces were provided at the Théâtre Lyrique, founded in 1847; and the home of *opéras-comiques*, which intermingled vocal numbers and spoken dialogue, was the Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique. Musical interpolations played a significant role, even

<sup>14</sup> According to the playbill reproduced in Figure 1, the venue of the performance was the Pester Stadttheater; however, going by the review published in the same journal, it turns out that the premiere took place at the Buda Arena.

<sup>15</sup> *Pesth-Ofner Localblatt* 10/120 (26 May 1859), [1]; 10/125 (1 June 1859), [2]; 10/130 (8 June 1859), [4].

<sup>16</sup> *Pesth-Ofner Localblatt* 11/140 (16 June 1860), [2]; 11/151 (3 July 1860), [1].

<sup>17</sup> For Offenbach in Vienna, see Walter Obermaier, 'Offenbach in Wien: Seine Werke auf den Vorstadtbühnen und ihr Einfluß auf das Volkstheater', in *Offenbach und die Schauplätze seines Musiktheaters*, ed. by Rainer Franke (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1999), 11–30; Matthias Spohr, 'Inwieweit haben Offenbachs Operetten die Wiener Operette aus der Taufe gehoben?', in *Offenbach und die Schauplätze seines Musiktheaters*, ed. Franke, 31–68; Marion Linhardt, 'Offenbach und die französische Operette im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Wiener Presse', in *Offenbach und die Schauplätze seines Musiktheaters*, ed. Franke, 69–84; and Rainer Franke, 'Chronologie der Aufführungen der Bühnenwerke Offenbachs in Wien, 1858–1900: Programme, Statistiken, Rezensionen', in *Offenbach und die Schauplätze seines Musiktheaters*, ed. Franke, 119–82.

<sup>18</sup> For Offenbach and the nineteenth-century Parisian theatrical landscape, see Matthias Brzoska, 'Jacques Offenbach und die Operngattungen seiner Zeit', in *Jacques Offenbach und seine Zeit*, ed. by Elisabeth Schmierer (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2009), 27–36.

**Pesther Stadt-Theater.**

Herr Carl Treumann als Gast.  
 24 Vorstellung im Abonnement.  
 Dienstag, den 24. Mai 1859.

**Hochzeit bei Laternenschein.**

Operette in 1 Akt nach dem Französischen von Carl Treumann. Musik von Jakob Offenbach. Für das k. priv. Carl-Theater eingerichtet und instrumentirt von Kapellmeister G. Binder.

Pierre, Inhaber eines Pachthofes — Hr. Treumann.  
 Denise, seine Ruhme — Fr. Swoboda.  
 Der Richter — Hr. Volkmar.  
 Fanchette, junge Witwe — Fr. Colling.  
 Katharina, Witwe — Fr. Winter.

Diesem geht vor :

**Bimmer und Cabinet zu verlassen.**

Posse mit Gesang in einem Aufzug, nach einem Sujet bearbeitet von Anton Wittner.

Ritscher, Fidiß — — Hr. Treumann.  
 Laura, seine Frau — — Fr. Haubt.  
 Frit, sein Kind — — Guste Hante.  
 Bauschberger, Hausherr — — Hr. Sailer.  
 Mesi, seine Wirthschafterin — — Fr. Swoboda.  
 Pichler, Futteralmacher — — Hr. Jordis.  
 Fanni, seine Frau — — Fr. Kohler.  
 August Holbrich — — Hr. Rott.  
 Mascher, Sollicitator — — Hr. Echten.

Zum Schluß :

**9, 12, 47,**  
 oder :

**Die Gelden in Krähwinkel.**

Burleske mit Gesang in einem Aufzug von David.

Spaßensiß — — Hr. Echten.  
 Kraßer — — Hr. Nikolini.  
 Kummelpuff, Kommandant — — Hr. Saag.  
 Klegensfeld, Doktor der Medizin — — Hr. Wagner.  
 Klaus, Gerichtsdiener — — Hr. Jordis.  
 Samuel Fieleses — — Hr. Treumann.  
 Cyprian Stangl — — Hr. Gáde.  
 Melchior Blingler — — Hr. Friese.  
 Stefan Hagl — — Hr. Karfchin.  
 Sali, ein Landmädchen — — Fr. Swoboda.

Anfang um  $\frac{1}{2}$  8 Uhr.

Figure 1 Playbill of the first known Offenbach performance in Budapest from the *Pesth-Ofner Localblatt* (24 May 1859)

at the institutions dedicated to vaudeville and theatrical plays. In a centre like this, it is not surprising that Offenbach became a theatrical musician. It is rather surprising that his theatrical activity did not primarily focus on the

**Table 1** Carl Treumann's guest performances, 1859–60

Premiere	Role	Piece	Original title
24 May 1859, BA	Peter	<i>Hochzeit bei Laternenschein</i>	<i>Le mariage aux lanternes</i>
30 May 1859, BA	Vertigo	<i>Das Mädchen von Elisonzo</i>	<i>Pépito</i>
6 June 1859, BA	Mathieu	<i>Die Zaubergeige</i>	<i>Le violoneux</i>
16 June 1860, BA	Isidor	<i>Der Ehemann vor der Türe</i>	<i>Un mari à la porte</i>
29 June 1860, PS	François	<i>Die Savoyarden</i>	<i>Le 66</i>

state-subsidized opera houses. Nevertheless, the French traditions of *opéra-comique*,<sup>19</sup> vaudeville,<sup>20</sup> and opera parody<sup>21</sup> played a significant role in the formation of his new genre, described in Central Europe using the umbrella term *Operette*.

In contrast to Paris, nineteenth-century Budapest was a city of only local importance from a theatrical perspective. As Hungary was part of the Habsburg Empire, the residential city of the ruler was Vienna, hence there was no opera house in Budapest until 1884. The other decisive factor that formed the character of theatrical life was the multi-ethnic character of the capital, which differed significantly from the cosmopolitan internationalism of Paris. As the Hungarian statistician Elek Fényes wrote in 1851, ‘the most numerous are the Germans,

<sup>19</sup> See Offenbach's overview of the history of *opéra-comique*, written on the occasion of an operetta-writing competition organized by the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens: Jacques Offenbach, ‘Concours pour une opérette en un acte’, *La France Musicale* 3/148 (17 July 1856), 6–7. For the theatrical context of this manifesto, see Mark Everist, ‘Jacques Offenbach: The Music of the Past and the Image of the Present’, in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. by Mark Everist and Annegret Fauser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 72–98; republished in Mark Everist, *Opera in Paris from the Empire to the Commune* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> For Offenbach and vaudeville, see Ralf-Olivier Schwarz, *Vaudeville und Operette: Jacques Offenbach's Werke für das Théâtre du Palais-Royal* (Fernwald: Burkhard Muth, 2007); Schwarz, ‘Vom Witz des Vaudevilles zum Rausch der Operette: *La Vie parisienne*’, in *Jacques Offenbach und seine Zeit*, ed. Schmierer, 198–220; Schwarz, ‘“Es ist das lustigste Theater in Paris”: Musik und Bühne am Théâtre du Palais-Royal 1831–1866’, in *Jacques Offenbach und seine Zeit*, ed. Schmierer, 46–64.

<sup>21</sup> For Offenbach and opera parody, see Siegfried Dörffeldt, ‘Die musikalische Parodie bei Offenbach’ (PhD diss., Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität, 1954) and Péter Bozó, ‘Offenbach and the Representation of the Salon’, in *Musical Salon Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Anja Bunzel and Natasha Loges (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 139–52.

then the Hungarians; much less the Slovaks and Serbs; although there are hardly any inhabitants in Pest who cannot speak or at least understand German and Hungarian at the same time'.<sup>22</sup> Fényes obviously based his claim on the results of the 1851 census, according to which, of the whole population of the capital (107,334 persons), 33,951 were native German speakers (31.63 per cent) and 32,562 native Hungarians (30.33 per cent).<sup>23</sup> Three decades later, according to the 1881 census, in Pest the number of Hungarian speakers (58.98 per cent) already exceeded that of Germans (28.8 per cent). In Buda, however, there was a German majority even at that time (50.21 per cent Germans and 40.46 per cent Hungarians), just like Óbuda (62 per cent Germans).<sup>24</sup>

Under such circumstances, the main difference between local theatres was not the genre they cultivated but their language. At the time when Offenbach's first operettas were premiered, German performances were given in three places: the Pest Municipal Theatre, the Buda Municipal Theatre, and the Buda Arena.<sup>25</sup> Until 1861, the only Hungarian theatre was the state-subsidized Pest National Theatre.<sup>26</sup> All three German stages belonged to one institution called the Vereinigte Deutsche Theater, directed by Georg Gundy in 1859–60.<sup>27</sup> Both the national and the German theatres provided all kinds of spectacles, produced on the same stage and more or less by the same company: operas, ballets, spoken-word plays, and other entertaining repertoire.

At the beginning of the 1860s, some changes in the theatrical landscape took place: on 26 August 1860 a German entrepreneur, Carl Alsdorf, opened a new German summer stage called the Thalia Theatre in the Budapest City Park (Városliget/Stadtwäldchen). It is worth mentioning that on the occasion of the opening performance of the new institution, two of the operettas premiered by Treumann were performed by local theatre companies: *Die Zaubergeige* and *Hochzeit bei Laternenschein*, attesting to the success of Offenbach's works.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Elek Fényes, *Magyarország geographiai szótára, mellyben minden város, falu és puszta, betűrendben, körülményesen leiratik* [Geographical dictionary of Hungary, in which every city, village, and wilderness is circumstantially described in alphabetical order], vol. 3 (Pest: Kozma Vazul, 1851), 224.

<sup>23</sup> József Körösi (ed.), *Budapest fővárosa az 1881. évben* [The capital Budapest in 1881] (Budapest: Ráth Mór, 1882), 110.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–5.

<sup>25</sup> For German theatre-making in Budapest, see Wolfgang Binal, *Deutschsprachiges Theater in Budapest* (Vienna: Böhlau Nachfolger, 1972).

<sup>26</sup> For the history of nineteenth-century Hungarian theatre-making, see Ferenc Kerényi (ed.), *Magyar színháztörténet*, vol. 1: 1790–1873 (Budapest: Magyar Színházi Intézet, 1990); Tamás Gajdó (ed.), vol. 2: 1873–1920 (Budapest: Magyar Könyvklub/OSZMI, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> L. Schneider (ed.), *Deutscher Bühnen-Almanach*, vol. 24 (Berlin: Hayn, 1860), 317.

<sup>28</sup> N. N., 'Die Eröffnung des Thalia-Theaters', *Pesth-Ofner Localblatt* 11/197 (28 August 1860), [3].

*Offenbach Performance in Budapest*

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**Table 2** Offenbach at the Buda Folk Theatre, 1861–70

Premiere	Piece	Original title
24 Sept. 1861	<i>Férj az ajtó előtt</i>	<i>Un Mari à la porte</i>
11 June 1862	<i>Daphnis és Chloé</i>	<i>Daphnis et Chloé</i>
17 Jan. 1863	<i>Dunanan apó és fia utazása</i>	<i>Le Voyage de MM. Dunanan père et fils</i>
28 Feb. 1863	<i>A dajka</i>	<i>La Bonne d'enfant</i>
18 Apr. 1863	<i>Choufleuri úr otthon lesz</i>	<i>M. Choufleuri restera chez lui le . . .</i>
3 Oct. 1863	<i>A kofák</i>	<i>Mesdames de la Halle</i>
24 Oct. 1863	<i>A fecsegők</i>	<i>Les Bavards</i>
7 Nov. 1863	<i>A 66. Szám</i>	<i>Le 66</i>
5 Mar. 1864	<i>Vasgyűrő, a legislegutolsó lovag</i>	<i>Croquefer ou Le Dernier des paladins</i>
11 May 1864	<i>Genovéva</i>	<i>Geneviève de Brabant</i>
13 Aug. 1864	<i>A georgiai nők</i>	<i>Les Géorgiennes</i>
11 Oct. 1867	<i>A gerolsteini nagyhercegnő</i>	<i>La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein</i>
18 Nov. 1868	<i>A makaróniárus</i>	<i>Coscoletto, ou le lazaronne</i>

Another important event in 1860 was the appearance of a new Hungarian company in the capital, led by György Molnár. At first, it shared the stage of the Buda Arena with the Germans, but from 1861 on the company performed at a new, second Hungarian institution called the Buda Folk Theatre (Budai Népszínház). Although Molnár's enterprise proved to be short-lived – it went bankrupt after two short cycles (1861–4 and 1867–70) – it represented an important new trend in local theatre-making. It was the first attempt to dedicate a separate stage to the popular repertoire, including Offenbach's operettas (see Table 2). It is also worth mentioning that Molnár received at least some of the performing materials directly from Paris.<sup>29</sup> Although the performance practice at his theatre is not well documented, one can presume that the pieces staged there were closer in approach to the French practice than those staged at other Hungarian theatres. Furthermore, the above-mentioned changes did not alter the

<sup>29</sup> According to contemporary press reports, in Paris he purchased the performing materials for Offenbach's *Mesdames de la Halle*, *Geneviève de Brabant*, *Le 66*, *Les Deux pêcheurs*, *La Rose de Saint-Flour*, *Tromb-al-ca-zar ou Les Criminels dramatiques*, *Croquefer ou Le dernier des paladins*, *Une Nuit blanche*, *Ba-Ta-Clan*, and *Vent-du-soir ou L'horrible festin*. N. N., 'Színházi hírek' [Theatrical news], *Színházi Látcső* 1/51 (27 May 1863), [3]–[4].

**Table 3** Offenbach premieres at the Pest National Theatre, 1860–4

Premiere	Piece	Original title
21 Nov. 1860	<i>Eljegyzés</i> <i>Lámpafénynél</i>	<i>Le Mariage</i> <i>aux lanternes</i>
14 Feb. 1861	<i>Férj az ajtó előtt</i>	<i>Un Mari à la porte</i>
14 Mar. 1861	<i>A varázshegedű</i>	<i>Le Violoneux</i>
30 Sep. 1861	<i>Az elizondói leány</i>	<i>Pépito</i>
25 Jan. 1862	<i>Fortunio dala</i>	<i>La Chanson de Fortunio</i>
31 July 1862	<i>Denis úr és neje</i>	<i>M. et Mme Denis</i>
12 Oct. 1863	<i>Az átváltozott</i> <i>Macska</i>	<i>La Chatte</i> <i>métamorphosée</i> <i>en femme</i>

fact that Budapest theatres at that time belonged to the category of *Mehrspartentheater* in the German secondary literature.

In contemporary Paris, it would have been unimaginable to perform operettas at the Comédie-Française, dedicated as it was to native spoken drama. In Budapest, however, this is exactly what happened at the National Theatre under the intendant Mihály Nyéki. Between November 1860 and October 1863 seven Offenbach one-acters were premiered (see Table 3). The performance materials used came from different sources: the libretto<sup>30</sup> and printed vocal score<sup>31</sup> of *Eljegyzés lámpafénynél* arrived from Berlin; the full score of *A varázshegedű* from Vienna;<sup>32</sup> while *Az átváltozott macska* was played during a guest performance by Pepi (Jozefa) Szabó from Košice in Endre Latabár's Hungarian translation, which was premiered there.<sup>33</sup> What is more, in July 1861, a six-day guest performance by Offenbach's own company took place at the National Theatre (see Table 4).

The mixed repertoire of the institution had strange consequences. Since it was also the home of opera, it was there that in 1863 Richard Wagner conducted two concerts of his own works. Some of the singers participating in the Offenbach performances – for example, the soprano Ilka Markovits and the baritone Károly Kőszeghy – also took part in the first local premieres of Wagner's music dramas, partly under Hans Richter's baton. However, the

<sup>30</sup> H-Bn, Theatre Department, MM 18.750.

<sup>31</sup> Kept in the library of the Hungarian State Opera House, without a shelf mark (Bote & Bock's edition). Cf. H-Bn, Theatre Department, Fond 4/96, fol. 2r.

<sup>32</sup> H-Bn, ZBK 204/a.

<sup>33</sup> The Košice premiere took place on 2 November 1862. See the local theatre playbills: H-Bn, Theatre Department (without shelf marks).